

## Numbers 16:1-35 - Thursday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010

- Well, here we go again, Numbers 16 is about another rebellion, this time it will come from a group of leaders led by Korah, a Kohathite.
- The Kohathites were given a very important position of leadership and were in charge of carrying the most holy things of the temple.
- It seems that they had become so exalted in their importance that they now come against Moses forming an insurrection to replace him.

"Moses gained nothing but trial and trouble by his leadership, and yet there were traitors in the camp who would have raised a rebellion against him."

Charles Spurgeon

1 Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; 2 and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown.

- Korah has clearly drawn disciples unto himself and attracted a following who are now rebelling against Moses and wanting his position.
- It's interesting to note that we are given the numbers of 250 of the leaders of the congregation of Israel who were "men of renown."

3 They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

- What they are saying in effect is; "Moses, who do you think you are? Do you think all you do makes you better than everyone else?"
- What they're doing here is cutting Moses down so that they can lift themselves up. Notice, they say that everybody else is holy too.
- The way they say what they say seems to indicate that they're trying to get Moses to resign because he's had his turn, now it's there's.

4 So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face;

- This is amazing, Moses responds in a way that is true to who he is as the most humble man who walked on the face of the earth.
- As one commentator so aptly noted; "Instead of Moses getting in Korah's face, in his humility Moses is getting on his own face."
- Notice that Moses seeks God before responding to Korah's accusation intimidation and recruiting others from the Israelite congregation.

5 and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him.

- This would seem to indicate that after seeking the Lord on his face, Moses now has his answer from the Lord as to what he should do.
- Only after this does he respond to Korah, and tells him that first thing in the morning, the Lord will settle this matter between them.
- I find it interesting that Moses simply lets the Lord decide and resolve this issue instead of trying to come up with a solution himself.

6 Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; 7 put fire in them and put incense in them before the LORD tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the LORD chooses is the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!"

- Now, Moses tells Korah and his cronies to take a censer, which was what only the priest was to do, and put fire and incense in them.
- Once they do this, the Lord Himself will choose who is right and who is wrong, who is holy and who is not, then Moses gets very bold.
- He goes on to rebuke them, and tells them that they themselves are guilty of the very thing that they're falsely accusing him of.

"This was an appeal to God that he might himself decide who were the authorized priests and leaders."

Charles Spurgeon

8 Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi: 9 Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; 10 and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also? 11 Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD. And what is Aaron that you complain against him?"

- Here Moses continues to rebuke Korah for not being content with the high position of importance in the service of the Tabernacle.
- In other words, it wasn't good enough, and Korah didn't feel important enough, so he makes this power play for Moses' position.
- Not only was Korah trying to overthrow Moses, he tries to overthrow Aaron as well because he wants the position of the priesthood.
- Also, notice how Moses defends his brother Aaron even after he and their sister Miriam had rebelled against Moses back in chapter 12.

12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come up! 13 Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us? 14 Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!"

- This is absolutely unbelievable. Moses seeks out Dathan and Abiram, who won't even give him the time of day let alone meet with him.
- They falsely accuse Moses of bringing them out of Egypt, the land flowing with milk and honey, so he could kill them in the wilderness.
- They take it further and accuse him of not only lording it over them but that he had no intention of bringing them into the Promised Land.

- There's more to this than meets the eye, because Dathan and Abiram are really rubbing Moses' nose in the sins of his past.
- Moses was a prince over Egypt, and he did in fact agree to the sending out of the spies which cost them entry into the Promised Land.
- Be that as it may, while Moses was not being a perfect leader, he was being a perfected leader in that God was doing a work in him.

15 Then Moses was very angry, and said to the LORD, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them." 16 And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the LORD -- you and they, as well as Aaron. 17 Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each with his censer."

- Now we're told that Moses finally gets angry, not only angry, but "very" angry, and in his righteous anger, he pleads with the Lord.
- I love what he says. He innocently asks the Lord not to respect their offering because he's not taken so much as one donkey from them.
- Then, after he says this to the Lord, he says this to Korah; "ok buckaroo, we'll see you and all your cronies first thing in the morning."
- "Oh, and be sure that you and all 250 with you bring your priestly censer's with fire and incense so you can bring them before the Lord."

- Before we move on I want to mention something here about Moses' anger. It's important to understand that this is a righteous anger.
- One commentator said it best when they wrote; "Sometimes people are offended that a man like Moses would be angry with men like Dathan and Abiram; they think a gentle, easy love is the proper response. Such thinking is understandable, but wrong: Shepherds are gentle with wayward sheep who might injure themselves, but they are passionately against wolves who would injure the flock."

18 So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron. 19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation. 20 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 21 "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

- Imagine the scene here. God is in effect telling Moses and Aaron to get out of the way so that He can consume every single of them.
- "Ok God, I'll get out of Your way they're all Yours, go ahead and start doing some consuming, I'll just be over here watching everything."

22 Then they fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?" 23 So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 24 "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'" 25 Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. 26 And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins."

- Moses and Aaron, instead of letting God destroy them, plead with Him to spare the rest of the Israelites from meeting Korah's fate.
- In response to this plea, the Lord tells Moses to tell the congregation of the Israelites to get away from Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

"How ready they were to intercede! How free from any trace of a revengeful spirit!"

Charles Spurgeon

27 So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.

- How sad is this? Even their wives and young children will suffer because of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram's rebellion against God.
- Perhaps it goes without saying, but we as men are grossly remiss if we think our family won't suffer when we are rebelling against God.
- When in rebellion we wrongly assume that our sin isn't hurting anyone. The fact of the matter is; it most certainly is more than we know.

- There's another lesson here as it relates to the Korah's of this world, in that we would do well to get away and stay away from them.
- Here we're told that this is exactly what they did. Had they not done that, it would have most certainly cost them their very lives.
- We have a couple of places in the New Testament where we are commanded to have nothing to do with the Korah's of this world.

**Titus 3:10-11** 10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. 11 You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. NIV

**Romans 16:17-18** 17 I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. NIV

28 And Moses said: "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. 29 If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. 30 But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD."

- Now Moses takes it a step further and confidently declares that they will soon know that he is God's man by virtue of what God will do.
- If Korah and his cronies die of old age, then the Lord hasn't sent me, but if God opens the earth and swallows them, God did send me.

31 Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, 32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. 33 So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly. 34 Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also!" 35 And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

- Wow! I hate it when that happens! This is the pits, pun intended. You'll forgive my sarcasm, but this is truly justice being served.

- Also, I would like to spend the remainder of our time looking at the practical application as it relates to all this detailed information.
- It seems quite clear that the lesson here is that rebellion has an anatomy. What I mean by that is, this chapter puts a face on rebellion.

- In verses 1-3, we see the face of what rebellion is,
- In verses 4-11 we see what rebellion will do
- In verses 12-14 we see what rebellion will “not” do
- In verses 15-27 we see what rebellion does cause
- In verses 28-35 we see what rebellion doesn’t cause

#### **Verses 1-3 - Rebellion is ...**

1. Infighting and insurrection in the family of God. (Korah was Moses’ cousin)
2. Brazen and disrespectful towards those in positions of authority. (One translation says they became insolent)
3. Exalting one’s self, and thinks more highly of himself than it ought. (Those raised up for - rise up before Moses - and against Moses)
4. Seemingly justified by virtue of the “numbers” involved. (They make this public including 250 leaders)
5. Attracted to those who are well known and well liked in the community. (Korah wants Moses’ popularity)
6. Able to attract a following because it comes from “leadership”. (Korah was in a position of leadership)
7. A group that comes with an agenda to oppose
8. “An angel of light” representing many others in the community and from the congregation
9. Wanting to make the rules and decisions. It sees the one who does have that authority as lording it over
10. Clever to distort the facts, accusing the self-abasing of being self-exalting, and abusing of that God given authority

#### **Verses 4-11 - Rebellion will ...**

1. Never get down on its face before God; it will get in the face of man. (Moses goes down as they rise up.)
2. Never ask if, or admit to any wrong. (Moses did nothing wrong, he was a proven leader, not a perfect leader).
3. Not be teachable or correctable. (Moses knows he can’t show or tell them anything, but the Lord can and will).
4. Be obstinate in the rightness of their cause and their campaign. (Moses is confident in his God and his calling).
5. Masquerade in a false cloak of humility and hyper-spirituality. (Moses is God’s man; he walks near to the Lord).
6. Invite confrontation and conflict. (Moses rebukes Korah and his followers dictating to them what to do).
7. Twist the facts and turn it around. (Moses exposes them for accusing him of what they themselves are guilty of).
8. Never be satisfied with, or grateful for anything. (Moses says; “isn’t it enough for you that \_\_\_\_\_”).
9. Try to get something it thinks it deserves to have. (Moses says; “now you are trying to get \_\_\_\_\_”).

#### **Verses 12-14 - Rebellion won’t ...**

1. Come to a resolution or genuine reconciliation, but Godly sorry and repentance can bring a true restoration.
2. Speak truth, but will “lie, accuse, and confuse”. (Egypt flows with milk and honey? It’s Moses’ fault?)
3. Keep the main thing the main thing, but will bring another thing into it so as to place the onus on the other.
4. Be honest and have integrity but will create question and doubt about the honesty and integrity of the other.
5. See things clearly and will accuse the other who doesn’t see it their way of being the blind leading the blind.
6. Want to see the light and will refuse to come to or stay at anything that would shed light/Bible on the matter.

#### **Verses 15-27 - Rebellion does ...**

1. Make the one who has not wronged respond in righteous anger.
2. Imply and state that the one in authority has no right to “take away” anything, so much as a donkey.
3. Have to answer to and appear before the Lord one day.
4. Eventually get what it thinks it needs, wants, and deserves, but ultimately it leads to a disastrous peril.
5. Separate many from the assembly; some never come back putting an end to fellowship even if it happens once.
6. Pretend to feel for and have concern for the “entire assembly,” but it’s a false humility with no basis in reality.
7. Not take ownership, or responsibility for the destruction that one man can have on an entire assembly.
8. Not “get away with it, or get a way to find out about it, rather it just gets swept away in it”.
9. Not heed the warning to “stay out of it, it gets caught up in it when it stays in “touch” with it.
10. Stumble, embitter, and destroy wives, children, and even little ones by cutting them off from fellowship.

#### **Verses 28-35 - Rebellion doesn’t ...**

1. Have any idea that the Lord uses the Moses’ of this world as “heavenly sandpaper” to do things.
2. See the Lord using it to validate, prove, authorize, and establish His calling on the Moses’ that He’s called.
3. Understand how it could be that the Lord is going to “bring about something totally new” from this.
4. Think it could ever be treating the Lord with contempt, it only thinks of itself and is never content.
5. Have any ground to stand on, but will most certainly split apart and take with it those who surround it.
6. Take responsibility for taking down families who are innocently caught up and get swallowed up in it.
7. Realize that it eventually will all start to close in, and come crashing down when it’s all said and done.
8. Take ownership for all the people that were consumed by it and are now gone from the community of believers.